

(v) Quality of rails have been improved.

(vi) In service testing of rails through ultrasonic flaw detecting machine is being done to detect defects in rail before they grow to failure size.

To avoid accidents due to human error, modern methods of training are being utilized for imparting training in Zonal Training Schools. Periodic safety drives are also launched to test the alertness of staff.

Gauge conversion from Samastipur to Saharsa

† 3911. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any proposal to convert narrow gauge lines from Samastipur to Saharsa into broad gauge is under consideration of Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVUAY SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. However, the lines are meter gauge and not narrow gauge.

(b) Work on gauge conversion of Mansi-Saharsa-Dhauram Madhepur section is in progress.

Gauge conversion of Samastipur-Khagaria section was included in the Railway Budget with the proviso that work would be taken up after obtaining necessary clearances. Action for obtaining their clearances has been initiated.

(c) Does not arise.

Handing over the ticket distribution to private sector

† 3912. SHRI KAPIL SIBAL:

SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) whether it is a fact that it has been decided to hand over ticket distribution work in the Railways to the private sector;

(b) if so, what are the facts in this regard and the percentage of ticket distribution work in the country, presently being handled by the private sector; and

(c) what are the details of factors responsible for taking a decision to hand over ticket distribution work to the private sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (c) Distribution of tickets through private parties is not a new phenomena and the system of issue of tickets by private parties such as Out Agents, City Booking Agents, Rail Tourist Agents, Halt Agents, etc. are already there since long time. Besides, RTSAs are appointed to purchase the tickets on behalf of those passengers who do not want to go to reservation office to purchase the tickets. It is difficult to calculate the percentage of ticket distribution work presently being handled by the private parties as no such data is being maintained and the number of Out Agencies, City Booking Agencies etc. changes from time to time. To proliferate retail railway ticketing through the use of Service Providers and terminal operators so that there is saving in the cost for the railways in this regard and for improvement in customer service, Indian Railways has entered into an Memorandum of Understanding with Indian Catering & Tourism Corporation Ltd. (IRCTC) to facilitate railway ticketing.

Rail line between Ghanauli and Pinjore

3913. SHRI SUKHDEV SINGH LIBRA:

SARDAR GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received proposals to lay rail line between Ghanauli and Pinjore *via* Nalagarh and Badi, so that Sri Anandpur Sahib is connected with Delhi through a fast track route;

(b) if so, when the proposal was received;